

Message Text

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SUBJECT: LEBANON AND EGYPTIAN PRESS: ASAD CRITICIZED BITTERLY

REF: CAIRO 8213

1. CAIRO PRESS JULY 22 SHORT ON DETAILS OF EVENTS IN LEBANON
BUT LONG ON BITTER EXCORIATION OF ASAD FOR HIS JULY 20 SPEECH.

2. SYRIA: BREAKING EDITORIAL SILENCE ON SYRIA MAINTAINED SINCE
JUST PRIOR RIYADH "RECONCILIATION" MEETING LAST MONTH, PRESS
ATTACKS ASAD PERSONALLY FOR FIRST TIME IN SIGNED COMMENTARIES ON
FRONT PAGES OF THREE MAJOR DAILIES. AHARAM QUESTIONS ASAD'S
TIMING OF SPEECH DURING POTENTIALLY SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS AT DIALOGUE
BETWEEN RIGHTISTS AND PALESTINAIN/LEFTISTS. EDITORIAL ASKS WHY
ISRAEL HAS NOT REACTED TO SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN LEBANON AND
REPLIES THAT ANSWER LIES IN US-SYRIAN AGREEMENT

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CONTAINING ASSURANCES THAT ISRAEL WOULD NOT MOVE. COMMENTARY

ADDS THAT ISRAEL IN ANY CASE TOO CLEVER TO INTERVENE SINCE SYRIA DOING ISRAEL'S WORK FOR HER.

3. AKHBAR COMMENTARY, CAPTIONED "GRAVEDIGGER, SPEAK UP" CALLS ASAD'S SPEECH PACK OF LIES AND STUPID CONTRADICTIONS SPOKEN ONLY TO JUSTIFY SLAUGHTER OF PALESTINIANS. SUGGESTS STRONGLY THAT SYRIAN-US COLLUSION LED TO AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL ON SYRIAN INTERVENTION.

4. GUMHURRIYA COLUMN, SIMPLY ENTITLED "ASAD" QUESTIONS TRUTH OF ASAD'S STATEMENT THAT HE HAD RECEIVED ISRAELI NOTIFICATION OF WHAT LIMITS TO SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN LEBANON SHOULD BE. ASKS WHY NEITHER US NOR ISRAEL HAVE REFERRED TO THIS "ULTIMATUM" TO SYRIA AND CONCLUDES THERE LIKELY WAS NONE. ASAD DEPICTED AS OUT TO DESTROY PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE AND TO PARTITION LEBANON, WITH RESULT THAT ARABS PREOCCUPIED WITH SIDE ISSUES AND NEGLECTING PRINCIPAL ARAB CAUSE.

5. ENGLISH LANGUAGE EGYPTIAN GAZETTE SOUNDED SIMILAR THEME. CLAIMED ASAD HAD NO RIGHT TO INTERVENE IN LEBANON CIVIL WAR AND ACCUSED HIM OF ENCOURAGING SLAUGHTER OF PALESTINIANS, "DOING EXACTLY WHAT ISRAEL WANTS TO NO COST TO HERSELF." EDITORIAL CALLED FOR ARAB SANCTIONS AGAINST SYRIA.

6. MILITARY: FIGHTING REPORTED RESUMED AND PAPERS PLY IT AS CONSEQUENCE OF ASAD'S SPEECH. PRESS REPORTS FALANGISTS AND CHAMOUNISTS FIRED ON ARAB SECURITY FORCES WHICH MOVED INTO BEIRUT BUFFER ZONE JULY 21. CHAMOUNISTS ALSO ACCUSED OF PREVENTING ICRC FROM EVACUATING TAL ZA'TAR WOUNDED.

7. DIPLOMATIC: ARAFAT AND JUMBLATT REPORTEDLY HUDDLED TO DISCUSS ASAD SPEECH, WHILE PALESTINIAN DELEGATION (QADDUMI ET AL) HAS RETURNED TO BEIRUT ACCOMPANIED BY LIBYAN PM JALLUD.

8. COMMENT: EGYPTIAN PRESS REACTION, RESERVED FOR 24 HOURS FOLLOWING ASAD'S SPEECH, COMES CLOSE TO ACCUSATION OF TREASON. EGYPTIANS CLEARLY STUNNED BY ASAD'S MOVE. WHERE GOE, WHICH HAD JUST BEGUN ALLOWING ITSELF TO DETECT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LIGHT AT END OF LEBANESE TUNNEL, GOES FROM HERE IS UNCLEAR BUT ORCHESTRATED CONDEMNATIONS OF ASAD UNLOOSED TODAY MAY INDICATE IT HAS GIVEN UP HOPE ON "DETENTE". SADAT'S SPEECH TONIGHT (JULY 22) MAY SUPPLY THE ANSWER.

9. AS EMBASSY REPORTED ONE MONTH AGO (REFTEL), CHARGE THAT USG IS COLLUDING WITH SARG IS NOT CONFINED TO EDITORIAL PAGES. EGYPTIANS CONTINUE BELIEVE THAT US APPROVES

SYRIAN ACTIONS, PARTICULARLY AGAINST PALESTINIANS. EVEN
SOME OF FAHMY'S AIDES STILL TAX US WITH THIS CHARGE, THOUGH
FONMIN HIMSELF HAS, HOPEFULLY, ACCEPTED OUR DEBUNKING EFFORTS.
EILTS

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